

BUNCOM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

MAY 1998

BRING THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO BUNCOM DAY ON SATURDAY, MAY 23

Who would have thought, when we put together a yard sale five years ago to raise money for Buncom, that in practically the blink of an eye – a five-year blink of the eye, that is! – we'd be celebrating the 5th annual Buncom Day, which has become an established family gathering.

Well, it's here. The latest and greatest Buncom Day will be celebrated at Buncom on Saturday, May 23, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The 5th anniversary is a milestone, one few of us expected to see happen when the Buncom Historical Society was organized to preserve the buildings and history of Buncom, Southern Oregon's last standing ghost town.

Buncom Day Chair Donna Epstein promises another fun family event in the tradition established over the years, a return – if just for a moment – to a simpler time. She is ably assisted by a number of Society members who chair various committees and activities.

Highlighting the occasion this year is the return of the Buncom Day Parade! Last year a number of folks expressed regret that the parade, a fixture of the Buncom Centennial Celebration in 1996, was not scheduled. So this year it's back – sort of scheduled for about 12:30. We say "sort of" because somehow we don't really get it organized on time. But it will happen!

We urge everyone to participate – walk, drive your car, bring a tractor or horse,

WORK PARTY WILL BE SATURDAY, MAY 16

Mark 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 16, on your calendar. It's the annual Work Party to get Buncom ready for Buncom Day.

This year it will also be the time for our Annual Meeting, which will be held briefly before we get to work.

Bring brooms, rakes, weed-eaters and such. We should be finished by noon.

(See Page 2 under "Thanks" for an extra bonus for all of you who attend.)

wagon, bicycle. The important thing is to have fun. And heck, how often do you get a chance to be in a parade without having to prepare in advance?

Also on the schedule are some old favorites: the Country Store, live music, food booths (this year to benefit our Applegate Valley Rural Action Team and prepared by the Upper Applegate Grange), craft and plant vendors, a petting zoo, farm demonstrations, the Applegate Valley Rural Fire Protection District, and on and on.

We will also have drawings for door prizes throughout the day, a book and bake sale by the Friends of Ruch Library, and of course The World Famous Buncom Chicken Splat Contest!

Admission is free, as always. Come out to Buncom and have a great time!

BUNCOM RECOGNIZED AT STATE SUMMIT

More than 350 leaders of arts, culture and heritage organizations from throughout the state heard about Buncom at the Oregon Arts and Culture Summit held in Portland in April. In a presentation following remarks by Gov. John Kitzhaber, Society Director Lyn Hennion encouraged the group to develop an Oregon Cultural Policy to assist the governor and legislators in making decisions on funding.

Her introduction as the "Baroness of Buncom" brought a round of good-natured chuckles, but a surprising number of hands were raised when the MC asked the audience who had heard of Buncom. Lyn said she was probably asked to speak because she was from outside the metropolitan Portland area – "Buncom's about as 'out of town' as you can get!" – where people help where they are needed and little distinction is made between "arts," "culture" and "heritage."

State Rep. John Watt, also a Society member who has been an effective advocate for the arts in Oregon, also addressed the Summit, welcoming the participants and thanking them for their involvement.

THANKS!

We like to make special mention when our members do special things for Buncom, or when they just have something nice to say about our efforts:

-- Special thanks to Russ and Janice Story, who will be providing refreshments for those of us at the Work Party. They must feel guilty, because they note they will be "lounging on a beach in Mexico at the time." Under the circumstances, we'll forgive them!

-- And thanks also to Mary Anne League, of Sutherlin, who is looking forward again to Buncom Day, even though Buncom is 115 miles away. "It is worth the drive!" she writes.

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

It's just \$5.00 per year per family. We need your support! If your address label has a "No" in the lower right corner, you haven't paid your 1998 dues yet. Send your check to Buncom Historical Society, 3232 Little Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530. Thanks!

If you aren't a member now, please join!

HAVE YOU TAKEN A LOOK AT BUNCOM'S WEB PAGE?

Back in 1995, Buncom went on the World Wide Web as "The First Ghost Town on the Internet." At the time we announced it in the newsletter and publicized its presence, but there weren't many people on the Internet then.

Since then, the Web has exploded, and the Buncom page remains, still updated and still the subject of favorable comments from visitors. Most of them say they like its simplicity and style – far from the hyper net-commerce and fancy animated graphics that are found on so many pages today.

If you haven't seen it, we invite you to take a look. Even if we're no longer the only ghost town on the Internet, we think Buncom is the best!

To find it, go to:

<http://www.mind.net/buncom/>

HOW JIM STERLING DISCOVERED GOLD

Sterling Creek, just east of Buncom, was named for Jim Sterling. It and the Little Applegate River were the sources of the gold that brought miners to Buncom.

Back in 1854, miners already had flocked to Jacksonville, where a rich gold strike had been discovered. Two of the part-time miners there were Jim Sterling, a 26-year-old native of Pennsylvania, and Aaron Davis, who jointly worked a farm near what is now Phoenix. They had a joint mining claim on Jackson Creek, but when they returned to it after harvesting their crops, they found that claim-jumpers had taken it over. So they headed out to look for gold elsewhere. As reported in "*Gold on Sterling Creek*," by Francis D. Haines, Jr., and Vern S. Smith:

They pushed some distance up (Sterling Creek) before stopping for lunch.

Halfway from the mouth to the source of the creek, an intermittent trickle comes in from the west. The little valley widens out at this point to its greatest width. It was here that Jim Sterling and Aaron Davis stopped for lunch.

The pine-clad hills look down on the scene today much as they did then. The meadow grass covers the bottom and a line of scrub brush marks the course of the main stream and the little tributary. On the east side of the main stream a draining way drops down to the main stream.

After the noon meal, Jim Sterling began prospecting in the hole left by an uprooted tree. It was a favorite device of the prospector, affording him easy penetration to the gold bearing gravel, if there were any. Working his pan in the small creek, he discovered a heavy showing of the pale gold, nearly a dollar's worth. Aaron Davis joined him and, in a few hours the two knew that they had made a rich strike.

SOCIETY HAS WIDE- RANGING MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Society stretches nationwide, and we have members in 10 states! Most members are from Oregon, of course, but we also have members in California, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Michigan, Georgia, Massachusetts, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

SISTER GHOST TOWN HAS NEW OWNERS

The ghost town of Golden, near Wolf Creek in Josephine County, has been purchased by the "Friends of Golden Coyote Woodlands," which owns and manages an adjacent wetlands restoration project.

A representative from the association met recently with Society President Reeve Hennion to learn about our successes in establishing our Society and preserving Buncom's buildings.

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The Buncom Historical Society is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the buildings and history of the ghost town of Buncom, Oregon. Society address: 3232 Little Applegate Road, Jacksonville, OR 97530.

On the Internet: <http://www.mind.net/buncom/>

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